



South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



NATIONAL SALUTE TO VETERAN PATIENTS

The week of February 14 each year is your opportunity to say thank you to a special group of men and women, more than 98,000 veterans of the U.S. armed services who are cared for every day in the VA medical centers, outpatient clinics, domiciliaries, and nursing homes.

The purpose of the National Salute to Veteran Patients Program is to:

- pay tribute and express appreciation to veterans;
- increase community awareness of the role of the medical center and veterans homes;
- encourage citizens to visit hospitalized veterans and to become involved as volunteers.

The 2012 National Salute program is scheduled for February 12 - 18.

During the National Salute, VA facilities and veterans homes invite individuals, veterans groups, military personnel, civic organizations, businesses, schools, local media, and celebrities to participate in a variety of activities at their facilities. The activities and events include special ward visits, valentine distribution, photo opportunities, school essay contests, special recreation activities, talent shows, concerts, and veteran recognition programs.

The week also provides an opportunity for the community to become acquainted with the volunteer opportunities within the facilities.

Contact your nearest VA Medical Center, CBOC or the Michael J Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home and ask for Voluntary Service to discover the wonderful things you, your group or organization can do to salute America's Heroes.

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TAXES ~ TAXES ~ TAXES

Beginning February and going until mid April, AARP volunteers will be on the VABHHCS campuses to assist veterans with tax preparation. This is a free service, available to veterans, volunteers, and VA staff.

Tax preparers will be at Fort Meade every Thursday morning beginning February 2nd until April 12th. Veterans must make an appointment by calling Melody in the Voluntary Service office (605-720-7151). Half-hour time slots begin at 8:30 am, and the last appointment will be scheduled for 11:30 am. Veterans are encouraged to arrive early for their appointment, and have all tax documents (W-2's, 1099's, 1098's, medical/charity expense records, and any other pertinent documents) with them.

Tax preparers will be at Hot Springs the first Tuesday of February, March, and April taking appointments for 8:30 until 11:30 as well. Please call Scott (605-745-2865) to make an appointment.



AUDITIONS NOW OPEN FOR SIOUX FALLS VA VARIETY SHOW

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care Center invites all area veterans to participate in the annual VA Variety Show on February 18, 2012. Veterans are encouraged to take this opportunity to showcase their talents in the show.

Auditions will be held until February 1, 2012.

The variety show wraps up National Salute to Veterans Week, February 12-18, 2012. Featured acts from previous shows included singing/instrumental solos or groups, skits, dancing, comedy, and magic acts. Veterans who participate in the show are eligible for national exposure by advancement to the National Veterans Creative Arts competition.

Interested in participating or want more information? Contact Recreation Therapy at 605-373-4143 or 800-316-8387, Ext. 6248 before February 1, 2011.



HEALTHY LIVING FAIR AT SFVAHCC

All veterans are invited to a "*Healthy Living Fair*" at the Sioux Falls VA Health Care Center on Friday, January 13, 2012, from 7:00 am – 4:00 pm.

VA staff will be on hand to assist veterans in becoming more involved in their health care, managing their stress, eating wisely, being physically active, and learning how to get recommended screening tests and immunizations.

Veterans can learn more about the patient center care teams, diabetes prevention, weight loss program, low vision program, crisis intervention, MyHealthVet internet service, secure messaging with health care providers, plus other wellness information. Attendees are also invited to pick up giveaways and enjoy healthy snacks while browsing the displays.

The health fair is sponsored by the VA Health Promotion Disease Prevention Committee and will be held in the 4th floor auditorium of the medical center at 2501 W. 22nd Street.



NEW COUNTY CVSOS

The Lyman County Commission has appointed Gary Sletto as their County Veterans Service Officer. Gary replaces Charles Kentsh. Gary also serves as the County Veterans Service Officers in Jones and Mellette Counties.

Meade County Commissioners selected David Egermier to serve as their County Veterans Service Officer. David previously served as the CVSO in Pennington County. David replaces Jerry Lolley who retired after almost 20 years of service to South Dakota's veterans.

CELL PHONES FOR SOLDIERS

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care Center reports that the Cell Phones for Soldiers program has benefited from your generous donations. Each donated used mobile phone allows Cell Phones for Soldiers to provide service men and women with the opportunity to communicate with loved ones for free.

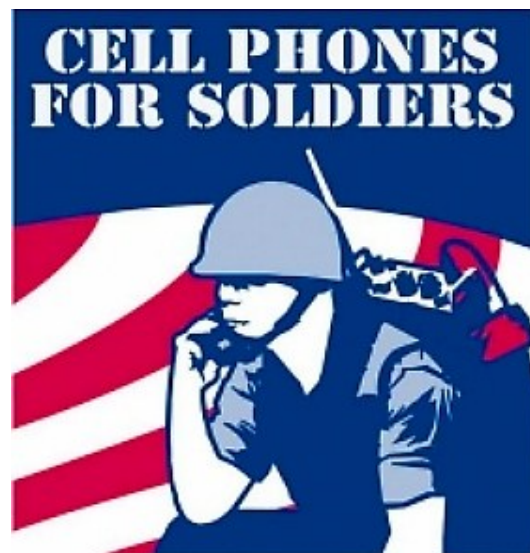
In October 2011, the Sioux Falls VA sent 104 cell phones, which provided 6,240 minutes of talk.

The Cell Phone for Soldiers is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing deployed and returning troops cost-free methods to communicate with family while serving in the United States military. To find out more about their program visit their website at:

<http://cellphonesforsoldiers.recellular.com/shippinglabel-generic.html>.

If you have concerns about donating your phone with your data, the Cell Phone Data Eraser gives you the tools you need to remove personal information like contact names and phone numbers from used cell phones. Visit their website for instructions:

http://www.recellular.com/recycling/data_eraser/default.asp



UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 13—VSO Congressional Forum—Rapid City

Jan. 16—State Offices Closed

Jan. 17—SFACF Sea of Goodwill Conference—Sioux Falls Holiday Inn City Centre

Feb. 6-7—South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting—SDNG Museum—Pierre

Feb. 18—SFVAHCC Variety Show

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